



EALING CIVIC SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

Working to preserve and improve our Borough



40TH YEAR 1967 – 2007

President: Prof. Sir Peter Hall Vice president: Corinne Templar

www.ealingcivicsociety.org

The
Civic
Trust

Autumn 2008

Ealing Civic Society Events 2008

A joint meeting with U3A

Thursday September 25th, 10.15 am
Liz Cantell Room, Ealing Town Hall
ECS members are invited to join the University of the Third Age at their meeting on the story of Boston Manor (£2 entry for non-U3A members)

The ECS Annual Award Ceremony

Thursday November 25th, 7.30 pm
Liz Cantell Room, Ealing Town Hall
Speaker: Bettany Hughes, historian, author and broadcaster

Chairman's report

Bob Gurd updates us on the current issues of concern to members:

The Council's consultation period on Dickens Yard has now expired and it is expected that there will be a special planning committee considering the application in September. In the meantime, the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) has issued a 'design review' of the scheme. In its summary CABE declares: "*Whilst we support the principle of developing this underused site to provide Ealing Broadway with a high density residential development and a new high end shopping street, [St George] has not made the case for this quantum of development in this form, or demonstrated that Dickens Yard has the capacity to be a well functioning and attractive place to live*".

The review concludes by saying that the development as proposed would in its view hinder rather than promote economic and cultural regeneration, and that planning permission should therefore be refused.

CABE's views echo the earlier critical comments from English Heritage about the scale and massing, and the overpowering nature of the development on the neighbouring Grade II listed Christ the Saviour church. It remains to be seen whether the developers, St George, press on with their

proposals as they stand, or whether they revise them in the light of this criticism.

Glenkerrin, of course, decided to do the latter for redevelopment of the Arcadia site and have now published revised proposals. As expected, it is a much reduced density development, with lower towers than previously proposed - a great improvement on the face of it - but, as is usual with these types of developments, the devil lies in the detail [see Tony Miller's article below].

The long-awaited Tibbalds Town Centre study report was subject to a public consultation meeting in June when over 100 people participated, including many of our members. It was gratifying to hear the unanimity of views on how people wanted the centre of Ealing to be developed in the future - these views were very similar to those expressed by Sir Peter Hall in his vision of Ealing delivered in our Annual Public Lecture in June [reported in more detail below].

The sharp-eyed amongst you may have noticed that a new piece of green open space has appeared in Hanger Lane next to Inglis Road. This is the exchange land provided by TfL as part of the Hanger Lane Bridges scheme, in which the Society has been involved for some years. Unfortunately, the grass, trees and shrubs were planted just before a very warm spell so it remains to be seen whether they survive to the end of the year. However, if they do, it should provide the first part of the proposed 'green corridor effect' planned for the replacement bridges

scheme, which should itself start in earnest in the autumn.

And finally, this September we are trying something new: a joint event with the Ealing branch of the University of the Third Age. We hope some of you will be interested in the talk by Janet McNamara about the history of Boston Manor [see box on page 1].

* * *

Arcadia redevelopment – the latest news

Tony Miller went to the 2-day exhibition put on by Glenkerrin at the end of July. Here are his initial reactions:

Glenkerrin have clearly learnt from their mistake over the lack of public consultation last time. Rather than a team of ill-informed PR girls, the A-team was fielded (although no retail specialist was on hand on the Friday afternoon). This was a much better attempt to explain the concepts, and to try to show they have responded to criticism and are still open to comment. There now seems to be a genuine wish to get an informed public response.

The obvious points of difference from the previous planning application are:

- The Leaf has been replaced by what might be called the Twig (or shamrock?), a much more slender, four segment block of up to 24 storeys, bridging only the northern set of rail tracks, allowing a realignment of the main 'street' straight from a re-sited crossing from the station.
- The blocks facing Haven Green are now a uniform nine storeys, with the links reduced to two-storey retail units with private amenity gardens on top, opening up the prospect on Haven Green. One of the pedestrian through routes across the tracks has been removed, and the other two widened.
- The number of housing units has been reduced by 18% to 577. The proportion of affordable housing is still much the same, at 14% (79 units).
- There is still talk of a major 'anchor store' although details are vague. The largest unit will be c. 60,000 sq ft.
- Parking has been increased to 240 spaces for residents and 140 for visitors/shoppers.
- The basement traffic access has been moved slightly north so as not to be directly opposite the school entrance.

Glenkerrin have also obviously tried to address the criticism that no provision was made in the Leaf plan for a transport interchange. Plans now show a dual road set of bus stands on the east of Haven Green, balanced by the removal of the diagonal road (though it is not clear whether this will be a formal part of the planning application). There is also a schematic diagram of development of the station/Villiers House, opening onto the forecourt crossing to the realigned main street through the site. However, it was emphasised that this was not part of the Arcadia development submission, but would be a second phase of Glenkerrin's plans.



The revised plan in relation to Haven Green. The new 'Twig' building is in the top right hand corner of the development.

There is as yet no detailed design plan for the new buildings, particularly the façade treatments (the visualisations in the exhibition are particularly horrid). There also seems to be no change to any of the New Broadway frontages, except for a slight widening of the proposed alley alongside Sainsburys.

In summary, this seems to be a genuine attempt to improve on the Leaf version and to meet some of the comments. Unfortunately many of the basic faults (density, scale and style) are endemic in the concept, and a lot more detail (e.g. how the massing of the blocks is to be handled) is needed. Nevertheless, dialogue does now seem more possible.

* * *

The Society's annual public lecture

The end of June saw one of the highlights of the Society's year – the annual public lecture. Each year we invite an eminent speaker to talk to an open audience about important topics of the day, particularly as they affect Ealing and its residents. Recent speakers have talked about the tram controversy and Heathrow expansion. This year the Society's president, Sir Peter Hall, gave a very timely contribution to the debate about the future of Ealing itself, in front of a standing room only audience.

Greg Birdseye provides a summary for those who could not get there on the night:

Sir Peter brought an objective, academic tone to his very informative talk, starting with Ealing's history as what he described as a "classical 19th century railway suburb". At that time the town was centred on the station, with shops and services at the core and relatively high density housing fanning out, largely within walking distance. He presented his own analysis of Ealing's current 'strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats', recognising established good points such as good quality housing and an identifiable centre, but offset by increasing pressures for densification and a weakening retail presence.

Sir Peter referred to the conclusions of the Tibbalds report, that Ealing is ranked well below other comparable centres such as Kingston and Bromley. Nevertheless he thought that the report provided only a limited 'master plan' for Ealing, for example underplaying the scale of the challenge of the White City development and giving little consideration to transport infrastructure, particularly around the station. Sir Peter felt that a balance needs to be found between change and continuity: he acknowledged that some increased density in central Ealing was inevitable, but felt that major developments would be better sited elsewhere, e.g. around Chiswick Park/ Acton Town or at Park Royal. Careful consideration must be given to parking provision in the centre in accordance with well defined environmental standards.

In an intriguing finale to his talk Sir Peter invited some of his current students to outline an alternative to the Dickens Yard and Arcadia proposals. They suggested that the two sites should be considered as one, with proper integration of facilities and interchange. Their solution was for a development at only half the proposed density of the two current

applications, albeit agreeing that some degree of high rise development was the only way to achieve it.

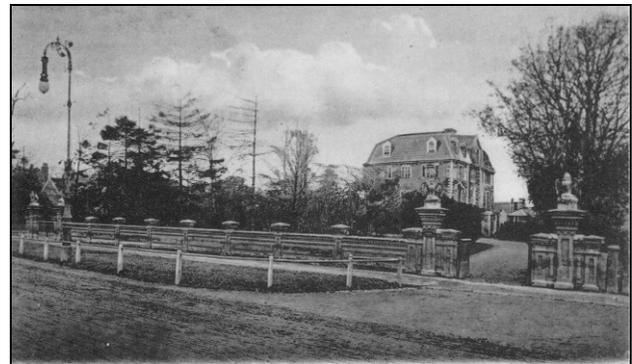
Bob Gurd, finally, thanked Sir Peter for a very thought provoking talk, which recognised that there are no easy solutions to how Ealing should regenerate itself to meet its current and future challenges.

* * *

100 years ago

Paul Fitzmaurice reminds us that perhaps the world hasn't changed much over time!

... the local newspaper was reporting the closure of 'the Owls' school in St Mary's Road [opposite what is now TVU]. Better known as Great Ealing School, it had had a long and distinguished history: under the headmasterships of Dr George Nicholas and his two sons, the school produced such Victorian luminaries as Cardinal Newman, Thomas Huxley and W S Gilbert.



Great Ealing School, from St Mary's Road

In its heyday the school was said to rival Harrow, but any sentiment for the past was ignored in the 1908 newspaper editorial, which had a surprisingly contemporary ring to it:

"We hope the county and local education authority will give careful and immediate attention to the question of acquiring it. There is a large house which might be used for administrative offices and classrooms and there are between 5 and 6 acres of land – enough to provide for the needs of Ealing in secondary and technical education for many years to come. As a matter of fact we believe it would pay the local authorities to acquire the estate. This sounds startling, but consider this, the alternative to public ownership is building development. Small property would be developed – there is no demand for any other

– there is room for 120 single or 200 double tenements.”

What actually happened also has a familiar ring. The envisaged new secondary school was actually built next to Pitzhanger Manor, on the site of a property called the Red House (formerly the home of Spencer Walpole) which was demolished. The new school opened in 1913 as Ealing County School for Boys and is now Ealing & West London College.

The Owls property was sold (for £8,000) and was also demolished. Almost inevitably, it was developed for housing, albeit that only some sixty houses were built in what is today's Cairn Avenue and Nicholas Gardens, a reminder of the old school's family succession of headmasters. The name is the only surviving memory of a very different Ealing from 100 years ago, but one where concerns as to land use were seemingly very much the same as today's.

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Open House weekend, Saturday 20th and Sunday 21st September

Christine Gratus has tracked down details of the delights available for this year's weekend:

Several of Ealing's historic buildings will be open to the public for the 2008 London Open House weekend in September, including some old favourites and some newer ones. Several have guided tours, and there are also guided walks around four of the borough's most interesting neighbourhoods. It's a great opportunity to see and hear their inside stories – and it's all free.

Buildings:

Acton Town Hall: Marble-clad hall, entrance and grand staircase, stained glass and original fixtures and fittings. (Sat 9 am – 5 pm).

Ealing Abbey: Building began in 1897, only recently completed. (Sun 1 pm – 5 pm).

Ealing Town Hall, Council Chamber and Mayor's Office: Late Victorian ragstone Gothic Town Hall with sumptuous Imperial staircase. Recently restored. (Sat 11 am – 4 pm /Sun 11 am – 3 pm; tour, talk and refreshments with present and past Ealing Mayors).

Ealing Village: Inter-war residential development representing the 'glamorous aspirations' of the period. Dutch-Colonial-Baroque style. (Sun 1 pm – 5 pm; tours at 1.30 pm, 3 pm & 4 pm).

Holy Cross Old and New Churches, Oldfield Lane South, Greenford: Small 15C parish church with flint-clad nave and wood cladding on tower. Adjacent new church of Canadian cedar red-wood. (Sat/Sun 11 am – 5 pm; regular guided tours).

Hoover Building: One of London's prime examples of Art Deco. (Sat/Sun 10 am – 4 pm; last entry 3.30 pm).

Pitzhanger Manor House: Grade I listed building, expressing Sir John Soane's idiosyncratic architectural style, with stripped classical detail, radical colour schemes and inventive use of space and light. (Regular tours Sat 11 am – 5 pm/Sun 10 am – 5 pm).

St Thomas the Apostle, Boston Road, Hanwell: Built in the distinctive style of the architect (Edward Maufe 1934) and containing many fine works of 20C art. (Sat/Sun 10 am – 7.30 pm).

The Manor House, Southall: Grade II* listed Elizabethan timber framed manor house with 18C additions, set in magnificent grounds. (Sun 10 am – 2 pm).

Walks:

Brentham Garden Suburb walk: Britain's first co-partnership garden suburb, first houses built 1901, mainly Arts and Crafts style. (Sat/Sun 10.30 am; meet at the Brentham Club, 38 Meadvale Road; walk lasts 2 hrs).

Ealing Common walk: Walk across Ealing Common, taking in the range of architectural styles. Home of a Wimbledon champion, a historic Ealing Studios film director and the death mask of Spencer Perceval. (Sun 2.30 pm; meet at the Hanger Lane entrance to Ealing Village).

Ealing Green walk: Stroll through the historic heart of old Ealing, ending at St Mary's parish church and taking in many listed buildings and notable residents. (Sun 11 am; meet outside Pitzhanger Manor; lasts 90 mins).

Hanwell flight of locks & Three Bridges: The restored flight of locks is a scheduled ancient monument, while Three Bridges is a unique stacked intersection of road, rail and canal, and Brunel's last major railway project. (Sat/Sun 1 pm, 2 pm, 3 pm, 4 pm; meet at The Fox, Green Lane; lasts 1 hour).

For more information on all of these, go to <http://www.openhouse.org.uk>, call 020 3006 7008, or write to: Open House, 44-46 Scrutton

Street, London EC2A 4HH for a copy of the Open House weekend guide (£4.50 inc. p&p).

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News about Gunnersbury Park

Philippa Dolphin brings us up to date on important developments at one of our local landmarks:

Although it is just over the boundary with Hounslow, Gunnersbury Park is one of the places which help make Ealing special. Gunnersbury has been open to the public since 1926, and is jointly owned by Hounslow and Ealing councils. Several generations of Ealing residents have used it to exercise, play sport, and walk their dogs. We have fed the ducks, flown kites, visited the museum and café, enjoyed the London mela, and admired the beauty of the historic buildings and magnificent trees.

But it is at risk: in total there are 21 listed buildings in the park, and 9 of these structures are on the English Heritage 'at risk' list. They include both the large and small mansions - built in the early 1800s and later owned by the Rothschild family - and the stables, an archway, and Gothic follies.

A new *Gunnersbury Park Regeneration Board*, currently made up of local councillors from both Hounslow and Ealing, has been set up and is searching for sources of funding. A *Conservation and Management Plan for Gunnersbury* has been commissioned, and the draft is available to view at www.hounslow.gov.uk/gunnersbury or by appointment at the Museum. If you want to be involved in the consultation, contact Richard Gill, the newly appointed Gunnersbury Park Development and Regeneration Manager, on 020 8992 1612, or email: richard.gill@hounslow.gov.uk.

The temple, boathouse and the large mansion will also be open on Saturday 20 September as part of the Open House weekend [see the article by Christine Gratus above].



Crumbling garden features at Gunnersbury

Local History Talks – Mapping the 1930s

Earlier in the year we gave details of a series of talks run by Ealing Library Services, based on the recently published Godfrey series of 1930s Ordnance Survey maps. As many of you will be aware, two of these talks had to be postponed because of delay in re-opening the Central Library. With the library now fully operational the new dates for these talks are: Tuesday 7th October, 6.30 pm: South Ealing - a talk by Paul Fitzmaurice
Tuesday 21st October, 6.30 pm: Ealing - a talk by Peter Hounsell
Tickets are £2 obtainable in advance from the Central Library or on the door (subject to availability).

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The 2008 ECS design award

The previous newsletter gave advance notice about this year's design award, and we have now firmed up the arrangements [see box on page 1]. We already have several potential entries including the new Acton mosque in Oldham Terrace, Northala Fields, the extension to Kingsdown Methodist church on Northfield Avenue, and Mount Carmel school (held over

from last year). More information and an application form are available on the website.



Northala Fields, now open to the public

Our guest speaker at the award ceremony this year will be the well known local resident, Bettany Hughes, who has written and presented a number of documentaries for television including *When The Moors Ruled Europe*, *Helen of Troy* and *The Spartans* for Channel 4. Her book on Helen of Troy - the first serious and wide-ranging book ever to have been written about Helen - was published in 2005 to great critical and popular acclaim. Make sure you put the date (November 25th) in your diaries.

News in brief

Civic Trust newsletter

Readers might like to know that individual members of the Society can receive the Civic Trust's bi-monthly e-mail newsletter. Log on to the Trust's secure online database at www.civictrust.org.uk/csocs/index.shtml. You will receive updates on news, policy and campaigns, special offers and how you can get involved in their local activities.

Tree planting

As a tangible contribution to improving the environment we are pleased to say that the Society is making a significant donation to the cost of the recently planted trees along the Uxbridge Road and on Ealing Common. This is part of the Society's ongoing programme of deploying funds received in recent years from late members' legacies. The Committee has particularly had regard to the understood wishes of those members - the late Margaret

Millar was particularly concerned as to the protection of the natural environment, and the late Freddie Irish (husband of former committee member Vivien Irish) lived by Ealing Common before moving to York a few years back.

A licensing representative urgently needed

For many years the Society has done its best to ameliorate residents' distress at the increasing number of licensed premises in the borough and their hours of opening. Jim McLaughlin, who recently retired from the executive committee, has represented us at a large number of hearings of the council's licensing panel, and we now need to find a replacement - someone who:

- has an interest in the subject
- is available to represent the Society and Ealing's residents at hearings (during the day - around one or two per month)
- can persuade an often trade-sympathetic panel of councillors that residents' needs should be considered.

Ideally we need someone with legal or licensing knowledge but it's not essential and we would brief and support you. But new applications are coming up all the time and we need your input now. If you feel you can contribute to the Society in this way, do please get in touch with Bob Gurd (8998 4417).

Arts and Crafts house open to visitors

Members might like to know about a very interesting house open to visitors in Hammersmith. No. 7 Hammersmith Terrace, a tall terraced house backing onto the river, is the former home of Emery Walker (1851-1933), friend and mentor to William Morris. Its sober Georgian exterior hides decoration and furnishings preserved as they were in his lifetime. It is described as the last authentic Arts and Crafts interior in Britain. The house is open for small groups of visitors each summer. If you want to know more about the house and its owners, or if you would like to visit or to help the small charitable trust that runs the house, see <http://www.emerywalker.org.uk>.

**Reading this and not a member?
Why not join us?
Phone 020 8567 4682 or see our website
www.ealingcivicsociety.org**